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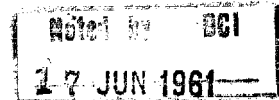
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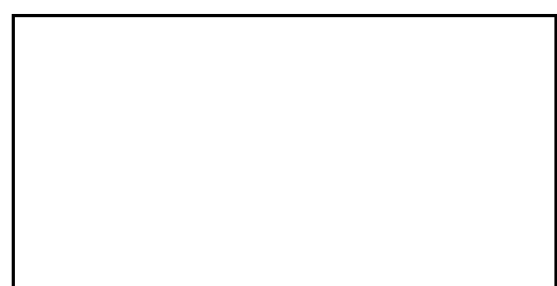


MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Coup Forces in Vientiane

1. There have recently been a number of reports of coup plotting by apparently non-Communist Laotian police and army officers in Vientiane who would like to replace Phoumi with Souvanna Phouma. Just prior to his departure for Europe on 6 June 1961, General Phoumi, aware of these reports, gave his intelligence chief, Lt. Colonel Siho, authority to handle all matters connected with the reported plotting.

2. Lt. Colonel Siho is director of the Direction Nationale de Coordination (DNC), a composite agency combining many of the powers and functions which we associate with CIA, the FBI, the Departments of Treasury and Justice, and the US Marine Corps. The most important counter-coup component of the DNC is the Support Force Group consisting of three battalions of troops under Siho's personal command.



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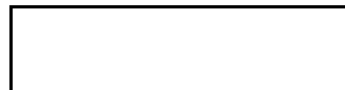
3. The majority of the 1,500 officers and men in the Support Force Group were recruited and trained by Siho in the south and fought with him in the battles against Kong Le and the PL culminating in the retaking of Vientiane last December. This group is quartered and trained separately from other FAL units and is generally regarded as Phoumi's private force. It was Siho and his Support Force Group that Phoumi called upon in April to halt the PL after they retook Vang Vieng and were threatening Vientiane. Although Siho's troops did not succeed in retaking Vang Vieng, they did effectively defend the route south to Vientiane, stabilizing the front at its present position. In short, Siho commands the largest single military element in Vientiane, one which has proved itself in combat and is personally loyal to him.

4. Given the military forces at Siho's command, together with the DNC's powers of surveillance, arrest, and detention, we believe it is unlikely that any non-Communist group in Vientiane, acting without support from the Pathet Lao, could successfully execute a coup d'etat against the Phoumi-Boun Oum government in the near future. However, if the PL covertly

joined the coup attempt, supplying arms, advice, and perhaps some cadres, Siho's chances of successfully resisting such a coup would probably be no better than even.

5. For the time being, the man most capable of a successful coup d'etat in Vientiane is Col. Siho himself, backed by his Support Force Group. The evidence currently available and Siho's record of loyalty to Phoumi both indicate such action by him to be unlikely; nevertheless, we cannot exclude the possibility.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



ABBOT E. SMITH  
Acting Chairman

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

14 June 1961

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR (Internal O/NE Only)

SUBJECT: Coup Forces in Vientiane

NOTE TO THE BOARD

This memorandum is in response to AD/NE's request for a brief accounting of (1) Lt. Colonel Siho's ability to counter Laotian elements in Vientiane who might be disposed to attempt to coup the Phoumi-Boun Oum government in favor of Souvanna Phouma, particularly during the period when most of the RLG ministers are out of the country, and (2) Siho's own propensities and capabilities for coup-making.

We recommend that it be made into a memorandum for the Director.

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